

Jose Alba's Opening Statement:

First, I want to make this clear. My testimony is not motivated by a political agenda. I am not here to support or side with any particular political party. I am not here because I am supporting Republicans, I am not here because I want to criticize the Democrats. I just want to tell the public about the horrible experience I had to go through because of crime in this city. An experience that has changed my life and that I will never forget. On July 1, 2022, I went to work at the bodega, just like any other day. I took pride in the hard work I put in everyday at the store, to earn my own money, and support myself and my family. That is when I encountered a true and real threat to my life. After I simply told a woman that she could not have potato chips, because her payment was declined, I was face to face with her boyfriend, who seemed ready to kill me. He attacked me violently, threw me around the store, the woman stabbed me herself. I truly believed they were there to kill me. So faced with this, I did what I knew I had to do to save my life, what the law allows me to do, to save my life. I stabbed that man in self-defense. But when the police came, even though I was injured myself, I was placed under arrest. I was taken to jail. When I came before the judge, the prosecutor said I was being charged with Murder in the Second Degree. They asked for bail, even though so many people are being let go these days, and I couldn't afford it. So I went to Rikers Island. I was forced into a crowded and unsafe intake cell. Even though I was injured, in jail I didn't get the medical treatment I should have received. I spent almost a week in Rikers Island before bail was lowered and I could be released. I was forced to endure the harsh conditions on Rikers Island as an innocent man. I still don't know why I was charged with murder. I believe that law enforcement and DA's Office didn't investigate the case fully. They rushed to judgment and I suffered because of it. Even though the charges were ultimately dropped, they should not have been brought against me to begin with. I am now traumatized from the incident. I am not working because I am terrified for my life that someone in a gang will come after me for revenge. I was injured physically and mentally because of the incident and my unlawful arrest and incarceration. My story is one that should not happen again. Crime does not discriminate on the basis of political party. It needs to be addressed by law enforcement on the street and by prosecutors in the court – but it has to be aimed at the people committing crime, not an innocent man like me. And the next time an innocent man does nothing but protect their own life in self-defense from a violent attack, they should not be made the villain, but instead, treated with care and compassion as the victim.